

Instructional Design of a MOOC

Most of the courses offered in Coursera and many other MOOCs environment are not full-fledged semester courses (or credit courses) but mostly a topic in a course that is independently relevant and interesting to others. These MOOC courses have been created as a way to educate others on some areas on topics that reflect instructor's research and academic work. The full Coursera or MOOC will very likely be a module or a unit within a regular semester course. Therefore, the design of a MOOC may differ from the courses that are taught on campus, especially in the assessment part, because the audience and the needs of the audience is different. In a MOOC we expect a participant that will come for information, not credentials. The goal is 'pure education' and the instructional design needs to consider the variations and provide space for those that come for the pure knowledge and leave, and also those that want to go further either in their education or in their learning. Coursera [explains their pedagogy](#) in their website. This document is a summary on what I believe should be the focus of the design of a MOOC, especially those that are non for credit.

There are five important elements that need to be considered when creating a MOOC so that students get the benefit of education from an expert but also feel contained and empowered to share and open their minds to grow in knowledge and within a new community of learning.

The five elements are:

- Novelty and Leverage for Previous Experience: Content that challenges and interests any participants with any level of expertise in a topic no matter what their previous experiences about the topic are.
- Input from diversity of sources: Rich amount of sources that come from diverse perspectives to help participants think and develop understanding of the topic. Videos, readings, ebooks, movie clips, and a variety of digital materials that can enrich the experience of being informed and learning.
- Gauge for understanding and further thinking: Self graded activities that allow participants to check their understanding of the weekly topic or discussion, and at the same time, make the participant think deeply about the issues presented in the week.
- Motivation for engagement and community learning opportunities: Encourage participants to select topics within the topic of the class to have their own discussions and learning hubs. Invite them to use class materials to trigger conversations and learning.
- Planning for Legacy : Inspire participants to create digital spaces that will continue the discussion or the information seeking for the topic of the class. Suggest students to take what they learn and be agents of change or discovery in their worlds of work or life.

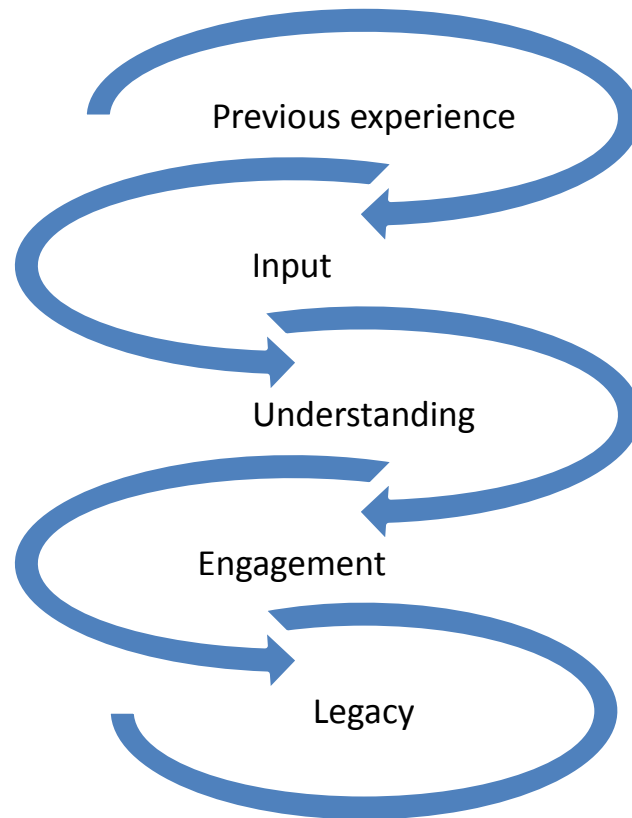


Figure 1: Important elements to include in the Instructional Design of a MOOC

Why are these elements important?

MOOCs enroll participants from different parts of the world and with different personal, demographic and professional backgrounds. The only thing that all participants have in common is their interest for the topic of the course. This interest, however, is diverse as well and although all may be interested in the topic not all the participants enrolled have the same commitment or motivation for learning about that topic, and their interest has perspective. The interest may go from learning more about a topic, to confirming concepts, to being curious, to finding a community to host discussion and concerns.

Audience heterogeneity makes it very hard to create a course that will appeal to all levels; so the elements proposed will help an instructor plan and be prepared for diversity, creating a space that will give inspiration and intellectual challenge to any levels of participation.

What materials and activities will facilitate learning in a MOOC?

	ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION	ACTIVITIES
REQUIRED TO COMPLETE COURSE	Recall Previous Experiences:	Triggers for thought or discussion, content that may appeal to students' reflection and will help as a starting point for the topic . Everybody will process the information in a different way, based on their own experiences, and everybody will bring new insights to the interaction. Be ready to accommodate people with no knowledge about the topic to people with PhD's in the subject.	Video Clips Case Studies Multimedia productions News
	INPUT	Rich amount of sources that come from diverse perspectives to help participants think and develop understanding of the topic.	Instructor's short videos (5-10 mins.) Readings Videos from other sources Other digital content
	CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING	Self graded activities that allow participants to check their understanding of the weekly topic or discussion, and at the same time, make the participant think deeply about the issues presented in the week. Activities can go from simple to more complex dimensions, from identify and respond, to analyze, and to search and respond.	Multiple Choice or True/false Matching exercise Investigate and complete Cloze – Fill in Blanks
OPTIONAL FOR SELF MOTIVATED PEOPLE	ENGAGEMENT	Encourage participants to select topics within the topic of the class to have their own discussions and learning hubs. Invite them to use class materials to trigger conversations and learning.	Community Regulated Discussions Digital materials that result from the discussions Example: Poster that reflects the community conclusions Web page Blog & Others
	LEGACY	How to motivate participants to carry on? Participants-created digital spaces that will expand and continue the discussion or the information seeking for the topic of the class. Participants may take what they learn and be agents of change or discovery in their worlds of work or life.	Spaces that students may create to continue the conversation after course is done: BLOG WEBSITE SOCIAL MEDIA SITE VIDEO OR PHOTO BLOG WIKI